

## Pursuing Shalom in the Smaller Church

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### Introduction

- A. Shalom means:
  - 1. To be safe in mind, body, or estate.
  - 2. It refers to a completeness, a fullness, a type of joy that expresses itself in the way we live our lives and interact with others.
- B. This workshop is about pursuing peace in the local church.

### I. A Biblical Framework

#### A. Genesis 1-2

- 1. We might say that conflict is rooted in *creation*—in the way we were made by God.
- 2. While our potential for conflict may be rooted in *creation*, our behavior in conflict is often rooted in the fall.
- 3. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit can change our behavior in the midst of conflict.

#### B. Acts 6:1-7

- 1. This is an example of group conflict.
- 2. It shows that group conflict occurred even in the early church.
- 3. It shows that conflict in the church can be resolved in ways that honor God and bless the church.

#### C. Philippians 4:2-3

- 1. This is an example of interpersonal conflict (conflict between two individuals).
- 2. Notice here that Paul is encouraging someone else in the church to step in, to “enter the fray,” and be a “true companion” or “yokefellow” in order to help these sisters in Christ resolve their dispute.

## **II. Common Types of Conflict**

- A. "What" conflicts.
- B. "How" conflicts.
- C. "Who" conflicts.
- D. Discern the kind of conflict (what, how, or who) and approach conflict resolution accordingly.

## **III. Things to Avoid in Conflict**

- A. Distorted thinking
  - 1. *Projection*
  - 2. *Dichotomous reasoning*
  - 3. *Overgeneralization*
  - 4. *Selective perception*
  - 5. *Magnification*
  - 6. *Arbitrary inference*
- B. Passivity
- C. Aggression
- D. Guilt

## **IV. Negative Effects of Conflict**

- A. Morale of the church
- B. Morale of the minister
- C. Unity of the church
- D. Ministry/outreach of the church
- E. Testimony/reputation of the church

## **V. Guidelines for Conflict Prevention**

- A. Christlikeness: humility, grace, forbearance, forgiveness.
- B. Communication: clear, constant, respectful.
- C. Connection: invest in people, work with the official and unofficial influencers.
- D. Caution: introduce change slowly.

## **VI. Guidelines for Conflict Resolution**

### A. Principles to Follow

- 1. Be as personal and informal as you can.
- 2. Take a measured approach.
- 3. Act wisely and quickly.
- 4. Be direct.

### B. Rules of Engagement

- 1. Know the nature of the battle (Ephesians 6).
- 2. Stick to the subject.
- 3. Play fair.
- 4. Be willing to negotiate.
- 5. Avoid defensive postures, attitudes, and words.
- 6. Employ well-placed humor (with sensitivity and discretion).
- 7. Speak softly and courteously.
- 8. Be proactive.
- 9. Don't shy away from conflict when a problem needs to be addressed.
- 10. Learn to live with a measure of disagreement (manage vs. resolve).

11. Value diversity.

**Additional Thoughts/Summary**

1. The emotional bank account.
2. Peace doesn't trump purity (although we seek both).
3. Pay attention to the people who are in the minority.
4. Stay focused on vision and ministry.